



Conflict of Interest

Category:	Continuing Medical Education
Number:	N/A
Responsibility:	Associate Dean, Continuing Medical Education
Approval:	College of Medicine Faculty Council
Date initially approved:	March 25, 2020, College of Medicine Faculty Council

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Detail the requirements with respect to recognition, disclosure and resolution of conflicts of interest (COI) relative to speakers and planning committees for events within the Division of Continuing Medical Education (CME) in the College of Medicine.

This policy and related procedures are in accordance with the [National Standard for Support of Accredited Activities](#) and the [Canadian Medical Association \(CMA\) Guidelines for Physicians in Interactions with Industry](#), as well as the [University of Saskatchewan Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

Principles:

CME content must be free from commercial influence, based on scientific evidence, and focused on improving the skills and knowledge of learners.

CME requires all potential speakers, members of planning committees, moderators, facilitators and authors to provide a written description of all relationships with for-profit and not-for-profit organizations over the previous two years.

Disclosure of COI is required to inform the audience of any bias speakers may have. In cases where there is a potential perception of bias, a written and verbal declaration of how that bias will be mitigated is required.

Definitions:

Continuing Professional Development Content: Content can include programs, seminars, conferences, workshops, lectures, online programs, and the production of learning resources designed for participation or use by health professional learners.

Conflict of interest: conditions where the personal and professional interests of individuals may have actual, potential or apparent influence over their judgment and actions.

Scientific Planning Committee (SPC): A group of target audience representatives responsible for the identification of the educational needs of the intended target audience; development of educational objectives; selection of educational methods; selection of scientific planning committee members, speakers, moderators, facilitators and/or authors; development and delivery of content; and evaluation of outcomes of an accredited CPD activity.¹

Scope of this Policy:

This policy applies to speakers at CME events, as well as SPCs.

Policy:

Conflicts of interest are identified through a [COI Disclosure Form](#). Disclosures can include (but are not limited to):

- Any direct financial payments including receipt of honoraria;
- Membership on advisory boards or speakers' bureaus;
- Funded grants or clinical trials;
- Patents on a drug, product or device; and
- All other investments or relationships that could be seen by a reasonable, well informed participant as having the potential to influence the content of the educational activity.

Planning Committee members are provided CMA's "Guidelines for Physicians in Interactions with Industry" as part of their committee onboarding, and are required to sign the [COI Disclosure Form](#) as part of their committee member packages.

All Planning Committee members are required to sign the COI Disclosure Form.

Responsibilities

Under this policy, speakers are responsible for:

- detailing potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of their presentation both verbally and within the slide deck
- identifying COI through the COI Disclosure Form.

Planning Committees are responsible for identifying COIs through the COI Disclosure Form and managing conflicts of interest, as necessary.

¹ National Standard for Support of Accredited CPD Activities, 2017, V. 23.1, Glossary of Terms, page 10

The Planning Committee (including Conference Chair), Director of Accreditation and Event Coordinator are responsible for reviewing disclosed conflicts of interest and determining the course of action. The Event Coordinator is initially responsible for reviewing presenter slides in advance of the presentation to monitor for conflicts and to ensure the speaker disclosure slide is included. Conflicts will be brought to the attention of the SPC/conference chair for mitigation.

Non-compliance:

If it is determined that a speaker conflict exists, options for managing the conflict are as follows (as per the Royal College):

- The speaker could be required to alter the focus of the talk to limit the areas where conflict of interest is significant.
- The topic selected could be changed, but the same speaker be used.
- The Planning Committee could ask for a peer review of the content to ensure that the principles of scientific integrity, objectivity and balance have been respected.
- Both topic and speaker could be eliminated. This is a very uncommon occurrence, but it can be a last resort if a significant conflict of interest cannot be otherwise managed.

If it is determined that a planning committee conflict exists, options for managing the conflict are as follows:

- The committee member could be asked to abstain from voting.
- The committee member could be asked to step down from the committee.

Procedures:

Contact the [Division of CME](#) for the Event Procedures Manual, which includes procedures related to conflict of interest.

Contact:

Associate Dean, Continuing Medical Education